

allowed to plead to lesser offenses. There was a terrible murder in Beatrice and several of the individuals involved, equally guilty, were allowed to plead guilty to a lesser offense and that doesn't seem to trouble some of the members of the Legislature but it troubles me. When we annex a punishment to certain conduct that we have said is illegal, this might sound like a plea for the death penalty, but it's not. It's talking about proper crimes and punishments.

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: When that penalty is annexed the vast majority of those who commit the offense ought to be subjected to or exposed to the punishment. In the case of the death penalty, that is not the case. And the ones who commit the worst version of the crime escape the penalty through a plea bargain or being able to hire a lawyer. I hope you will look at this bill. If you adopt Senator McFarland's amendment, it, indeed, will narrow the scope of this punishment. But, by so narrowing, it gives a specified identifiable class of persons from which those subject to this punishment will be drawn and it sets up the conditions under which even from that class those who will suffer the maximum penalty will be drawn. I hope you will adopt his amendment, then I hope you will support the bill. I am not in favor of the death penalty under any circumstances, but a lessening of the scope of the punishment...

SPEAKER BARRETT: Time.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...if that's all that I can obtain, I have to accept it.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. The Chair is pleased to announce that Senator Miller has some guests in the north balcony. We have 24 fourth graders from Axtell Community School and teacher. Would you people please stand and be recognized. Thank you for visiting with us this afternoon. Senator Ashford, further discussion.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members, I would... a lot has been said that needs to be said on this issue, but I would like to read into the record a couple of statistics that I think emphasize what Senator McFarland is saying here. And if we look at the statistics, death sentences imposed as of July 31st, 1984, we can see the disparity and the incongruity that has been talked about here. First of all, 22 percent of